


Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

February 22, 2002

TDH Hot Topics



Identification of Cost Savings in FY 02-03.

The Governor's Office and the Legislative Budget Board have requested that all agencies identify options for cost savings for the remainder of the biennium. TDH is coordinating efforts with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to identify potential cost savings and impacts of any reduction to the agencies goals and objectives. *For more information, contact Machel Pharr, Financial Services at (512) 458-7111, ext. 7429 or e-mail machelle.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Immunization Stakeholder Meeting.

Last week, TDH convened a gathering of stakeholders to review and update a statewide immunization action plan. Attendance at the meeting was outstanding with 24 of the 28 invitee groups in attendance. The group developed an expanded list of other stakeholders who should be included. A subcommittee was formed to begin to work on engaging these stakeholders. The committee is selecting National Infant Immunization Week, April 15 - 19, to seek input from community level stakeholders regarding an action plan. The meeting was a great first step. *For more information, contact Linda Linville, Immunizations at (512) 458-7111, or e-mail linda.linville@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Emergency Order.

TDH closed an Arlington food company specializing in oriental foods after inspectors found a rat infestation, including nests of baby rats, in, on or near food products at the store. TDH has detained all of the company's products, and Commissioner of Health signed an emergency order closing the facility. The TDH's emergency order temporarily closes the facility pending an administrative hearing scheduled for March 13. *For more information, contact Derek Jakovich, Director, Licensing and Enforcement Division, Bureau of Food and Drug Safety at (512) 719-0222 or e-mail derek.jakovich@tdh.state.tx.us.*



2002 Oral Rabies Vaccination Program.

The 2002 Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP) began on January 7 and concluded January 31. There was a distribution of 2,765,936 doses of vaccine over South and West-Central Texas. Coyote surveillance is scheduled for February 24 - 28 and gray fox surveillance will occur during the months of March, April, and May. *For more information, contact Dr. Ernest Oertli, Zoonosis Control Division at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail ernest.oertli@tdh.state.tx.us.*

The Regional Public Health Technician participated in the final leg of the drop the 2002 Oral Rabies Vaccination Program at the Gillespie County Airport, Fredericksburg, Texas. A total of 1,061,541 baits were distributed during 75 flights on this eastern leg of the gray fox epizootic area. *For more information, contact James Wright, Zoonosis Control Program at (903) 533-5243 or e-mail james.wright@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Disease Outbreaks



Hepatitis A in Olney.

The Texas Department of Health (TDH) is recommending that pre-kindergarteners through third graders attending Olney Elementary School be vaccinated against hepatitis A. TDH will offer the vaccinations in the school auditorium this Friday. Regional director James Zoretic, M.D., reports a total of 16 cases of hepatitis A in Olney since Oct. 1 -- more than half in children under 10. Health officials would normally expect one case a year in this size population. Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver. Signs and symptoms include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and abdominal discomfort. *For more information, contact James Zoretic, Regional Director at (817) 264-4500 or e-mail james.zoretic@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Shigellosis outbreak.

Region 2/3 investigated a Shigellosis outbreak that involved a total of 51 individuals in Vernon. The first cases were disclosed on November 26 and reported to TDH on December 10. A regional team was assigned to investigate and take action to prevent further infection. Initially there were 13 confirmed cases followed by 12 more cases the next week, 24 more cases over the holidays and 2 more in mid-January.

TDH staff contacted and determined exposures, worked with restaurants and food handling services, visited numerous food establishments, contacted local daycares and schools and provided example letters to be mailed to parents. Regional Environmental and Consumer Health staff, and the Client Services clinic staff in Vernon assisted in obtaining histories on confirmed cases. The Regional Director and Epidemiologist worked with the Wilbarger County Health Authority, the Wilbarger General Hospital ER, and the Wilbarger General Hospital laboratory for confirmation of shigellosis cases.

Local newspapers informed citizens on December 14 and January 7 by writing about clinical symptoms, the incubation period, and the precautions to take to avoid spread of the disease. The outbreak has subsided. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Foodborne Outbreaks.

TDH is continuing to investigate the E. coli outbreak that induced illness in 21 persons in West Texas in November. Whole head lettuce is significantly associated with and explains the majority of illness. Most of the involved restaurants obtained head lettuce from one supplier.

Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance (IDEAS) Division staff have also been involved in 3 concurrent outbreaks of hepatitis A, one in North Texas and two in South Texas. Two may involve food in institutions - one in a school and the other in a county jail. The third centered on a sick baby who was cared for by a number of different relatives, including a foodhandler. Hepatitis A immunoglobulin and hepatitis A vaccine have been administered as considered appropriate. Investigations of the two unsolved outbreaks are continuing. *For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail linda.gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) Outbreak.

Over the past four months 45 cases of MRSA infection have been reported in a training class on the DPS campus in Austin; eight of the recruits were hospitalized. Most of the initial cases occurred in October, however new cases and one recurrent case occurred in January of this year. Infection control recommendations made in December had not been

strictly enforced. Following a site visit in early January, more than a dozen recommendations (mostly infection control issues) were made to curb the outbreak. In addition, a questionnaire concerning risky activities and personal hygiene habits was administered to the 125 trainees and staff members. Data analysis has begun. MRSA continues to be a frequently reported problem to the infectious disease division but is not currently a notifiable condition. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, Nurse Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Group A Streptococcal (GAS).

Initial analysis of the medical records of ten cases with genetically indistinguishable group A streptococcal infections (CDC confirmed) failed to identify the source of the infection and a decision was made to proceed with a case-control study. Medical records from the additional twenty GAS cases along with the medical records from 75 controls were abstracted in early January. Preliminary analysis of the data shows a strong correlation between GAS infection and exposure to a member of the wound care team. Use of a vacuum wound closure device may have increased the risk. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, Nurse Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hepatitis B Virus (HBV).

The occurrence of three acute hepatitis B cases in a long-term care facility in Harris County is under investigation. A total of 212 residents and staff members were screened to determine their HBV status. Serology demonstrated that 5 residents and 1 staff member are HBV carriers (HBsAg+, HbcAb+); 5 residents and 1 staff appeared to be either late convalescent or chronic carriers (HBcAb+ only); 9 residents and 6 staff members showed evidence of old infections (HBcAb+, HbsAb+); and 4 residents and 9 staff were HCV positive. Of those who were HCV positive, 1 resident and 1 staff were coinfecting (HCV/HBV). Both the staff and residents are scheduled to be interviewed and medical records abstracted for analysis by the end of February. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail gary.heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Foodborne and Waterborne Diseases.

TDH regional and central offices were notified on November 20, of about 300 inmates in a West Texas correctional facility reporting symptoms of gastroenteritis over the weekend. Upon investigation, 507 ill inmates were identified. Specimens from 6 inmates have tested positive for *Salmonella typhimurium*; about 10 more are pending. The implicated meal had been served on November 10, at the midday meal. One food item, Pico de Gallo, was strongly implicated. Unfortunately, all saved food except one dish of Pico de Gallo kept in a separate refrigerator was discarded. The Pico that was saved tested negative for *Salmonella*. The most likely source of the infections is considered to have been an infected food-handler. The inmate primarily responsible for the Pico preparation had prepared barbecue chicken, from raw chicken, 3 days before becoming ill on the same day that he prepared the Pico.

TDH regional and central offices were notified of 6 culture-confirmed cases of *E. coli* O157 infections in the same West Texas city with onsets within 3 days of each other over the Thanksgiving weekend. There were 21 ill persons who were either culture-positive or, because of symptomatology and onset dates, considered to be ill from the same kind of infection. The source is likely some kind of produce that was distributed to a number

of restaurants. *For more information, contact Linda Gaul, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail linda.gaul@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Campaigns



5-A-Day Media Tour Across Texas.

The Bureau of Nutrition Services, in collaboration with Produce for Better Health Foundation, conducted a media tour across Texas January 21 – 25. The purpose of the tour was to make Texans aware of the importance in eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

The tour included 16 events in 4 cities (Fort Worth, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio). Tour participants, including Produce Man and other fruit and vegetable costume characters, distributed 5 A Day promotional and educational materials, fruits and vegetables. The Austin event at Whole Foods included Dr. Charles Bell reading the Governor's Proclamation declaring January 21 – 25, Texas 5 A Day Week. The Produce for Better Health Foundation is a national non-profit organization which represents produce and retail industry partners. Other tour partners included state and local representatives from American Cancer Society, Texas Department of Agriculture, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Texas Extension Agency, Texas Education Agency, Houston Food Bank, Boys and Girls Club and numerous produce and retail groups. *For more information, contact Barbara Keir, Public Health Nutrition and Education Director, Bureau of Nutrition Services at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2144 or e-mail barbara.keir@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Folic Acid Campaign Grant.

TDH has received the third and final year of the March of Dimes Mission Investment Opportunities Program (MIOP) grant. The \$45,494 grant, developed by representatives from the Bureau of Nutrition Services, the Texas Birth Defects Monitoring Division, the Bureau of Women's Health and the Texas Chapter of the March of Dimes (MOD), will fund statewide activities such as the distribution of folic acid starter kits through family planning clinics, the provision of folic acid information to health care providers through trainings and poster sessions and the procurement of promotional materials. The project also includes the continuation of the Texas Folic Acid Council, comprised of TDH and MOD staff as well as various external stakeholders. The grant extends through Dec. 31, 2002. *For more information, contact Chan McDermott, Perinatal Health Program at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail chan.mcdermott@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Vaccines for Children Program Re-enrollment Campaign.

Over 3,000 clinic sites enrolled in the Texas Vaccines for Children Program must re-enroll on an annual basis, to comply with federal requirements. The re-enrollment period began on October 1, 2001, and all forms are due to the program by January 31, 2002. The program has set its goal to have 100% of these re-enrollment forms processed by the end of February. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program at (512) 458-7284, extension 6215, or e-mail jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Perinatal Social Marketing.

The HIV/STD Health Resources Division is developing a perinatal HIV prevention social marketing campaign for women of childbearing age with HIV infection or at high risk for HIV infection. This spring, staff will conduct one-on-one interviews with women in this specific audience in an urban (Houston) and a rural (Lufkin) market to

identify knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding HIV infection, pregnancy, and prenatal health. The team will research real and perceived barriers to seeking both prenatal care and an HIV antibody test. Research will also identify appropriate channels to reach this audience. Because this is a relatively small group, the campaign will probably try reaching individuals through pamphlets, promotional items and events, incentive coupons, and/or audio/video cassettes instead of mass media.

The market research report will be completed by April 2002. After reviewing the report, TDH will develop campaign materials and distribution strategies. The campaign will be piloted in Houston and Lufkin this summer, and an evaluation of the campaign's effectiveness in increasing awareness of the need for prenatal care and HIV testing will be conducted in the fall. *For more information, contact Casey S. Blass, Director, HIV/STD Health Resources Division at (512) 490-2515 or e-mail casey.blass@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Reports



Influenza.

Since mid-January, Texas has reported widespread influenza activity to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Influenza activity in Texas remained low from October through mid-January. Since the beginning of January the number and percentage of specimens testing positive for influenza viruses have increased. The predominant influenza viruses isolated in Texas this season have been type A (H3 N2). As of February 5, the TDH laboratory has also isolated sporadic influenza B virus from several counties in the state. All flu specimens isolated by the TDH lab are well matched by this season's influenza vaccine. Influenza A (H3N2) virus is the predominant strain circulating nationally. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, Nurse Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail neil.Pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Rabies.

Zoonosis Control Division PHR 2/3 has investigated 471 positive rabies cases in animals this past year (2001), this exceeded last years (2000) count of 381 positive rabies cases in animals with 90% being skunks. The majority of the cases for 2001 were also from rabies-infected skunks (92%). The rabies cases in skunks started in the northern part of Region 2/3, Denton, Cooke and Wise Counties in 2000 and has drifted south during 2001, with the highest cases reported in Tarrant (91) and Navarro (45) Counties. Denton County still maintained a high number (46) of rabies-infected skunks in 2001. Investigations revealed that dogs were the primary source of exposure to the rabies-infected skunks, although reports of rabies infected skunks chasing after humans have been received. So far this year, January 1 to January 15, we have had 17 reported rabies infected skunks with the majority of our cases being reported in southern areas of Tarrant and Navarro Counties. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*

TDH Program Updates



Health & Human Services Consolidation Efforts.

Senate Bill 1, Rider 21 of the 77th Legislature requires the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to review the effectiveness and efficiency of the business processes of all Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies under its purview with the goal of consolidating support services systems. The rider further requires HHSC to determine items of appropriation where reductions may be made in the total amount of \$10 million in general revenue funds by September 1. A number of HHS work groups are currently looking at consolidation efforts for all HHS agencies. *For more information, contact Wanda Thompson, Operational Support at (512) 458-7111, ext. 7720 or e-mail wanda.thompson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Emergency Leave During Military Activation.

Many individuals are being called into active military duty as part of the Homeland Security mission under U.S. Code Title 10 or Title 32. State leadership issued a letter dated November 21, 2001 asking agencies to consider emergency leave for state employees called to active duty. After coordinating with other agencies, TDH developed the following policy: If an employee is called to active duty as part of this mission and his/her military pay is less than his/her state pay, state agencies have been authorized to grant emergency leave to make up the difference between the employee's state pay and military pay. If an employee's military pay is NOT less than his/her state pay, one hour of emergency leave can be granted to allow the employee to retain state-paid employee-only insurance benefits and retirement service credit. *For more information, contact Ernie Klatt, Bureau of Human Resources at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2408 or e-mail ernie.klatt@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Mold Remediations.

It is the goal of TDH that all employees work in safe and healthy environments. To this end, whenever a TDH employee experiences symptoms of illness that might be associated with the quality of the indoor air in their workplace, the Bureau of Resource Management (BRM) investigates the situation, taking air and surface samples where necessary, and arranges for all needed corrective action. Such action may range from relatively minor interventions (such as special cleaning and/or removal of plants or other organic matter) to comprehensive remediations requiring construction work that might include asbestos abatement.

Successful remediations accomplished within the last year include: remediation of mold contamination in over 11,000 square feet in the Tower Building along with some asbestos abatement; removal of plants and special cleaning in various parts of the G Building; remediation of mold in over 2,000 square feet in the Service Building and rehabilitation of air handlers; remediation of air handler and carpet replacement in Moreton Building-7th Floor; remediation of the air handler in the Central Plant; remediation of air handlers, bathroom flooring, fume hoods and over 4,500 square feet for mold contamination in the Lab Buildings; mold remediation of the northeast wall of the Carroll Building and removal of the exterior earth berm and replacement with stone; remediation of the second floor of the Warehouse; and mold remediation of five offices in the Donley Building. *For more information, contact John Burlinson, Bureau of Resource Management at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2762 or e-mail john.burlinson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA).

HIPAA, passed by Congress in 1996, establishes health care industry standards for the protection of individually identifiable health information. HIPAA has four distinct phases: Electronic Transactions, Privacy, Security, and National Identifiers. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (USHHS) is responsible for writing rules and for enforcement. To date, USHHS has published rules for Privacy and Transactions. Covered entities in the public and private sector must comply with Privacy by April 2003 and with Transactions by October 2003.

To date, state agencies in Texas have received no capital authority or funding to pursue implementation of HIPAA. During the 77th session, the Texas Legislature passed a HIPAA Rider attached to the Appropriations Bill requiring specific state agencies, including TDH, to report cost projections and progress toward compliance by September 1, 2002.

Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC), Commissioner Don Gilbert, plans to submit HIPAA cost projections to the Governor's Office and the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) on behalf of HHSC, TDH, Texas Department of Human Services, and Texas Department of Mental Health Mental Retardation in an effort to obtain capital authority and funding before the next session. TDH's high-level cost estimates for HIPAA Transactions are \$6.4 million. HIPAA Privacy cost estimates are in development and are due to HHSC by February 28. *For more information, contact Judy Sandberg, Information Systems at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6262 or e-mail judy.sandberg@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Bureau of Radiation Control.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its contractor, US Ecology has initiated decontamination activities on two former radioactive materials manufacturing sites. One site is in Webster and the other is in Houston. Both sites were abandoned when Gulf Nuclear of Louisiana filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. EPA was requested to remediate the site, as there were no funds available from either Gulf Nuclear or state sources. The EPA is performing the cleanup using emergency action funds.

Buildings and equipment at the facilities are contaminated with radioactive materials that were used in the manufacture of radioactive sources used primarily in the oil production industry. Both sites will be remediated for release for general use by EPA. The Webster site has been fenced and a security firm hired to prevent unauthorized entry. The EPA on scene coordinator estimates that the cleanup will take about five months to complete.

During the decontamination and decommissioning at both sites, Bureau of Radiation Control (BRC) staff from Region 6 and the central office will provide health physics support as needed. After the facilities have been decontaminated and all radioactive material removed, BRC staff will conduct surveys to verify that all radioactive contamination has been removed and release the site for unrestricted use. *For more information, contact Richard Ratliff, Bureau of Radiation Control at (512) 834-6679 or e-mail richard.ratliff@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Council of Independent Licensing Board Chairs.

The Council of Independent Licensing Board Chairs met February 1. TDH administratively supports the council. Its purpose is to consider issues of mutual concerns shared by the independent licensing boards. At the meeting, the board chairs discussed

the Business Practice Evaluation Report and issues for the upcoming legislative session. For more information, contact Jim Zukowski, Division of Professional Licensing at (512) 834-6628 or e-mail jim.zukowski@tdh.state.tx.us.



TDH Obtains Court Order Prohibiting Firm From Salvaging Medical Devices Damaged in Tropical Storm Allison.

On January 10, a Houston company agreed to a temporary injunction barring the firm from salvaging medical devices without a license from TDH. In December 2001, the Texas Attorney General's Office, acting on behalf of TDH, obtained a temporary restraining order against the salvager in order to prevent the firm from further trade in medical devices that could have been damaged by floodwaters during last June's Tropical Storm Allison in Houston. A TDH investigation of the firm had resulted in the detention of hundreds of suspect devices, including respirators, Continuous Positive Airway Pressures (CPAP), Bi-Level Positive Airway Pressures (BiPAP), and nebulizers. The investigation found that the company had purchased about 400 flood-damaged devices from Houston's Veterans Administration Hospital. Records from the hospital indicate that these officials intended that the mud-covered or water-damaged devices should be destroyed. The firm is being prosecuted for alleged violations of the Deceptive Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Act and the Texas Health and Safety Code. Under the latter statute, the defendant can face penalties of \$25,000 per violation per day. For more information, contact Tom Brinck, Drugs and Medical Devices Division at (512) 719-0237 or e-mail tom.brinck@tdh.state.tx.us or Derek Jakovich, Licensing and Enforcement Division, Bureau of Food and Drug Safety at (512) 719-0222 or e-mail derek.jakovich@tdh.state.tx.us.



Attorney General Referrals.

A manufacturer and distributor of a topical cream product known as Viacreme was referred to the Office of the Attorney General by the Drugs and Medical Devices Division requesting injunctive relief as well as civil penalties. The company has made certain health claims that its topical cream product has aphrodisiac properties, which appear to violate federal and state laws.

The Manufactured Foods Division referred a pharmaceutical company making false and misleading health/drug claims to the Office of the Attorney General. The pharmaceutical company manufactures and distributes dietary supplements and food products. For more information, contact Derek Jakovich, Director, Licensing and Enforcement Division, Bureau of Food and Drug Safety at (512) 719-0222 or e-mail derek.jakovich@tdh.state.tx.us.



Warehouse/Distributor Stakeholder Meeting.

The Bureau of Food and Drug Safety (BFDS) conducted a stakeholder meeting on January 25, involving food wholesalers and drug and medical device distributors. There were about thirty people at the meeting, including BFDS staff, representatives from the Texas Warehouse Association and the International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses, and a legislative aide from Senator Duncan's office. Several other legislative offices including Senators Harris and West, and Representatives Isett, Goodman, and Averitt had contacted BFDS. The meeting involved the proposed implementation of a change in BFDS's licensing policy of allowing warehouses to license on behalf of their distributor tenants. A productive discussion resulted in consensus to not implement the proposed policy change, but rather continue to allow warehouses license on behalf of their tenants and a stakeholder workgroup has been formed to develop recommendations for statutory changes to Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 431. The associations have committed to help TDH with the changes

looking to the next legislative session. *For more information, contact Derek Jakovich, Director, Licensing and Enforcement Division, Bureau of Food and Drug Safety at (512) 719-0222 or e-mail derek.jakovich@tdh.state.tx.us.*



WIC Program.

On January 10, a letter was sent from Longview Neighborhood Clinics, Inc., Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) local agency #103, declaring their intent to discontinue contracting with the TDH WIC Program. A new provider of WIC services to 5,840 potentially eligible participants in Gregg County is being solicited through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. The RFP will be released on February 15, with a due date of April 1. Staff in the WIC Program and Region 4/5 North will review applications. It is anticipated that a new provider will be in place by May 1. *For more information, contact Debbie Brookshire, Provider Relations Director, Bureau of Nutrition Services at (512) 458-7111, ext. 3454 or e-mail debbie.brookshire@tdh.state.tx.us.*



SB 877 WIC Advisory Committee.

SB 877, 77th legislature, requires Health and Human Services Commissioner Don Gilbert to establish a committee to advise TDH and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) on WIC policy, rules, implementation of an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) food delivery system, and other issues such as pricing of WIC foods sold by grocers. The committee must consist of WIC clinic staff, client advocacy group representatives, and retail vendors. Commissioner Gilbert has delegated the establishment of the committee to the Commissioner of Health.

With considerable stakeholder input and review by Dr. Sanchez, the WIC staff completed its recommendations for committee members. Senator Van de Putte, the bill's author, supports both the selection process and the recommendations for membership. WIC staff will soon announce these selections and convene the first committee meeting. *For more information, contact Valerie Wolfe, Policy Coordinator, Bureau of Nutrition Services at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2072 or e-mail valerie.wolfe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Awards for Excellence in School Health.

The Awards for Excellence in School Health recognizes successful school health programming on a state level. Now in its 13th year, the Awards for Excellence in School Health continues to be funded by the Texas Health Foundation and provides cash awards ranging from \$750 - \$1,500 to 15 selected applicants each year. The application is now available online and to date over 300 requests for hard copies have been received and mailed out. The Texas Medical Association included an article in the January 2002 issue of their monthly newsletter *Action* urging physicians to become involved in local school health activities, including promotion of this award. *For more information, contact Michelle McComb, Coordinator, School Health Program at (512) 458-7111 ext. 3307, or e-mail michelle.mccomb@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Texas Guide to School Health Programs.

The "Texas Guide to School Health Programs," a new 1,000 page manual being published by TDH, is a compilation of best practices, legal guidelines, and resources patterned after CDC 8 component coordinated school health model. Target audience includes school health professionals, school administrators, health educators, school board members, local school health advisory council members and other interested in school health. This manual is the first publication to provide this type of information

since a school nurse manual produced by the Texas Education Agency ceased publication in 1989. *For more information, contact Michelle McComb, Coordinator, School Health Program at (512) 458-7111, ext. 3307, or e-mail michelle.mccomb@tdh.state.tx.us.*



HB 2614.

77th Legislative Session requires TDH to develop and implement a dental pilot program to treat indigent children residing in border areas. The department's goal, thru the pilot program, is to serve 750 children per year in selected underserved areas of Cameron and Hidalgo Counties, with emphasis on the colonias. The program is utilizing school nurses and existing community resources, such as a community center that was created by Housing and Urban Development, A&M School of Rural Public Health, and the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Services began December 1, 2001. *For more information, contact Jerry W. Felkner (512) 458-7323, ext. 2105 or e-mail jerry.felkner@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Expanded Newborn Screening.

The Associateship of Family Health and the Associateship of Disease Control and Prevention have established a Task Force on Expanded Newborn Screening. The purpose of the task force is to develop recommendations regarding possible expansion of the Newborn Screening Program. The first meeting of the task force was held on February 5, regarding tandem mass spectrometry for metabolic disease screening among newborns. Participants come from various areas of the state and include consumers as well as health care professionals and others, with a wide-range of expertise. Ideas generated at the meeting will be distributed for comments and future meetings planned. *For more information, contact Margaret Drummond-Borg, Genetics & Case Management Division at (512) 458-7111, ext 3101 or e-mail margaret.borg@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Stakeholder Meeting.

The Texas Council on Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke held a stakeholder meeting in November 2001 to develop action step recommendations for the state plan required by HB 2085. Over 60 representatives from a variety of agencies participated in the stakeholder meeting. Local health department directors were asked for input and have provided comments. A continuing process of soliciting input has been incorporated since the meeting, with the final recommendations determined during the January Council meeting. The final state plan will be ready for review by February by the BOH at the March meeting. *For more information, contact Jennifer Smith, Cardiovascular Health and Wellness at (512) 458-7670 or e-mail jennifer.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Educational CME Video.

The Texas Diabetes Council has produced a new educational Continuous Medical Education (CME) video on treatment of diabetes. Fifteen hundred have been mailed to date. The video will soon be available by videostreaming on the TDH website. *For more information, contact Jan Ozias, Texas Diabetes Program/Council at (512) 458-7490 or e-mail jan.ozias@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Television Media Messages.

New television media messages encouraging African-American men to quit smoking were released on Martin Luther King, Jr. day in Port Arthur, Texas. Dr. Charles Bell, local mayors and other dignitaries participated in the media launch. *For more information,*

contact Dr Philip Huang, Bureau of Chronic Disease and Tobacco Prevention at (512) 458-7200 or e-mail philip.huang@tdh.state.tx.us.



Ten Against TB Meeting.

On March 8, the Executive Committee of Ten Against TB (TATB) will meet in McAllen. At the meeting they will discuss a request for proposal for a permanent TATB Secretariat, develop a proposal for a new profile for TATB, develop an agenda for the Steering Council meeting to be held June 2002, and discuss the mechanisms for funding transfers. *For more information, contact Jose Moreira, TB Elimination Division at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Animal Friendly License Plates.

Created by the Texas Legislature in 1997, Animal Friendly license plates are designed to create funding for low-cost spays and castrations. Over \$700,000 has been raised. Qualifying organizations are eligible for up to \$25,000 over a two-year period with the option to reapply for additional years. Successful grant applicants must demonstrate a collaborative effort between local animal control and welfare agencies, veterinary organizations, and human services organizations. The successful applicants must also propose a new program that does not duplicate existing sterilization efforts and provides for low-cost surgeries on a per animal basis. TDH is finalizing the application and will be accepting proposals during spring 2002. *For more information, contact Debbie Speicher, Zoonosis Control Division at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail debbie.speicher@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).

The staff prepared for and facilitated the quarterly meeting of the Hepatitis C State Workgroup meeting, which was held January 22. Thirty members attended this meeting. The staff arranged for two guest speakers and developed a survey for the workgroup. The Director of Education and Enforcement at Texas Cosmetology Commission, presented information to the workgroup regarding state regulations and cosmetologists. Daniel Goldman MD, Expert Health Data Programming, presented the Heprates database that was developed for the TDH, IDEAS Division. The HCV staff are also preparing projects for review by the Hepatitis C State Workgroup subcommittees, which will reconvene on February 27.

The hepatitis C staff completed specifications for the redesign of the hepatitis C Web pages and wrote the request for bids.

The Associateship for Disease Control and Prevention was awarded the Board of Health Award for the "hepatitis C initiative" at the TDH Awards Banquet on January 17. The award was given for the cooperative work on the initiative among several TDH divisions for implementing the different components of the initiative, including the seroprevalence studies, counselor training, counseling and testing, laboratory work, healthcare professional training, and public education and awareness projects. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail gary.Heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Antibiotic Resistance.

The Texas Committee for the Judicious Use of Antibiotics, the Texas Department of Health, and the Texas Medical Association (TMA) are co-sponsoring the 1st Inaugural Antibiotic Bowl. This is a quiz show type event designed to educate medical students

about antibiotic resistance and to promote appropriate antibiotic use. Teams from 6 medical schools will participate in the March 9 preliminary rounds in Houston; two teams will go on to compete in Dallas, during the annual TMA meeting on April 20. Infectious Diseases Epidemiology & Surveillance staff are coordinating this event. *For more information, contact Olga Nuno, Staff Epidemiologist, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail olga.nuno@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Blue Ribbon Committee on Childhood TB.

On January 9, the members of the Blue Ribbon Committee on Childhood TB and stakeholders interested in screening children for TB met in Austin to discuss implementation of the recommendations of the committee. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us.*



New CDC funding.

Categorical funding in cooperation with Comprehensive Cancer Control, Breast and Cervical and the Texas Cancer Registry (TCR). The TCR was notified that a new funding process will be initiated by the CDC to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the award process to states. CDC Division of Cancer Prevention and Control (DCPC) will consolidate all national cancer-related cooperative agreement program announcements in support of state and local efforts into one program announcement. This includes the National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, and the National Program of Cancer Registries. They have indicated that the cooperative agreement recipients will still receive categorical funding for each of their programs. The focus is on streamlining the award process. *For more information, contact Nancy Weiss at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail nancy.weiss@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Suspected Cancer Cluster Investigations.

Four suspected cluster investigations were initiated in January and four investigations were completed. The Texas Cancer Registry (TCR) received 41 requests for cancer data during the month of January. The TCR also completed an extensive data request for the Texas Cancer Council (TCC). The TCC will be utilizing cancer registry data for strategic planning purposes. *For more information, contact Melanie Williams at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail melanie.williams@tdh.state.tx.us.*



CDC Call for Data.

The Texas Cancer Registry completed the CDC Call for Data and it was published in national publications on cancer incidence. The CDC Call for Data is our grant requirement to submit cancer data to CDC that they will then combine with other states to publish national cancer statistics. Both state-specific and combined data will be published by CDC. This has not happened as of yet and they are looking at the quality of our cancer data to see if and when we will be included. We are having Texas-specific data published from another call for data to the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR). The NAACCR publication is "Cancer Incidence in North America" and it will be coming out in June of 2001. *For more information, contact Nancy Weiss at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail nancy.weiss@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Cancer Data Work Group.

The Cancer Data Workgroup met on January 18, under the New chairmanship of Dr. Ed Middleman. The Workgroup is comprised on stakeholder groups and will be providing

input and comments on upcoming proposed rules for the implementation of SB 285, which establishes health care practitioner (primarily physician) reporting of unique cancer cases. *For more information, contact Nancy Weiss at (512) 458-7523 or e-mail nancy.weiss@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Medicaid Waiver.

The Assistant Division Director of the HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division continues to participate on the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Workgroup to develop a “concept paper” on proposed models and cost estimates for a Medicaid waiver for people with HIV/AIDS. At this time, Medicaid staff are considering submitting a waiver application to either the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, formerly the Health Care Financing Administration, or the Health Insurance Flexibility and Accountability (HIFA) demonstration initiative, a new Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) section 1115 waiver approach.

The primary goal of the HIFA demonstration initiative is to encourage new comprehensive state approaches that will increase the number of individuals with health insurance coverage within current-level Medicaid and SCHIP resources. The Administration puts a particular emphasis on broad statewide approaches that maximize private health insurance coverage options and target Medicaid and SCHIP resources to populations with income below 200 percent of the Federal poverty level.

The HHSC Policy Analyst assigned to the workgroup has developed a draft paper; the staff from the HIV/STD Epidemiology Division supplied feedback and revisions/additions. The concept paper was submitted to six potential participating hospital districts for district staff to determine whether it will be fiscally advantageous for them to participate in a Medicaid waiver application. A telephone conference call was held to discuss the concept paper and “next steps”. Subsequently, technical assistance was given for resources to assist HHSC in developing a model to meet the local hospital district and federal requirements, in anticipation of submission of the waiver to the HHSC Commissioner and, eventually, to the Governor's office. *For more information, contact Linda S. Moore, Director, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Prevention Counseling Sessions.

HIV/STD Epidemiology Division staff began development work on a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded project to create and evaluate tools and quality assurance models to assist counselors in conducting prevention counseling sessions in a manner consistent with the CDC and TDH guidelines and goals for HIV prevention counseling. This project is funded for two years. There are four prevention counseling providers who have agreed to implement the tools and models developed in this project on a trial basis to allow for the evaluation of these tools: Tarrant County Health Department, City of Laredo Health Department, Valley AIDS Council, and Resource Center of Dallas. Staff met with CDC in late December to begin protocol development on the project. *For more information, contact Sharon K. Melville, Director, HIV/STD Epidemiology Division at (512) 490-2545 or e-mail sharon.melville@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Director in Ethiopia to provide HIV Prevention Technical Assistance.

The Director of the HIV/STD Health Resources Division has been sent to Ethiopia for the second of three trips under the sponsorship of the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention and the National Association of State AIDS Directors. He went as part of a select team that will provide technical assistance to the Ethiopian government in the development of HIV prevention infrastructure needed to address the nation's HIV problem. *For more information, contact Casey S. Blass, Director, HIV/STD Health Resources Division at (512) 490-2515 or e-mail casey.blass@tdh.state.tx.us.*



HIV and Youth.

HIV/STD Health Resources Division staff has completed five kiosk presentations to run in the lobby of the main campus. These five presentations correlate to the December 1, 2001, World AIDS Day Initiative, which focused on HIV and Youth. The five presentations cover information on national and international statistics, adolescent sexual and drug use behavior, corrections of common misconceptions and myths concerning HIV and HIV transmission, statistics on numbers of youth in Texas who are infected with HIV, as well as encouragement and support for parents to talk to their kids. *For more information, contact Casey S. Blass, Director, HIV/STD Health Resources Division at (512) 490-2515 or e-mail casey.blass@tdh.state.tx.us.*



HIV and Youth: Communication Strategies.

HIV/STD Health Resources Division staff presented *HIV and Youth: Communication Strategies* to project coordinators of Texas Males Care (TMC). TMC is a Texas male involvement program whose mission is to enhance and promote communication about the positive contributions that young men in Texas can make to family planning, child rearing, reproductive and sexual health, preventing unwanted pregnancy and sexually passed infections. The program focused on the diverse risks youth face for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, general descriptions of developmental stages confronting adolescents, and how adults can develop strategies for sharing useful information with youth. *For more information, contact Casey S. Blass, Director, HIV/STD Health Resources Division at (512) 490-2515 or e-mail casey.blass@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Third Party Distribution.

Based on SB 282, the Third Party Distribution Request for Information (RFI) has been completed. Based on the finding of the RFI, a Request for Proposal (RFP) has been posted on the Texas Marketplace. *For more information, contact Pat Feagin, Assistant Division Director, Immunization Division at (512) 458-7284, extension 6323, or e-mail pat.feagin@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Healthcare Pathfinder Award.

Vivian Harris, Outreach Coordinator and Mr. Jarrod Davis of Wal-Mart pharmacy division were nominated to receive a Texas Pharmacy Foundation Healthcare Pathfinder Award for their work in establishing a partnership between Wal-Mart and TDH.

The Healthcare Pathfinder Awards identify and recognize pathfinders contributing to delivery through partnerships of pharmacists, physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Through recognition, these pathfinders are held up as motivation for others to emulate.

Mr. Davis and Ms. Harris were instrumental in bringing together Wal-Mart stores and community clinics. More than 440 Texas schoolchildren received free back-to-school immunizations this summer. This is a first time effort that both Mr. Davis and Ms. Harris are dedicated to replicate in other communities throughout the state. *For more information, contact Vivian Harris, Outreach Coordinator, Communication and Training Program, Immunization Division at (512) 458-7284, ext. 6420 or e-mail vivian.harris@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 1



Bioterrorism Videoconference.

On November 17, Region 1 hosted a bioterrorism teleconference for local public health partners and first responders. Attendees heard presentations on topics like epidemiology, the Health Alert Network and the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) Push Packs from experts like Dennis Perrotta, Mike Mastrangelo and Sam Wilson. There was considerable interaction between the attendees in Lubbock and the experts in Austin, and reaction to the videoconference was very positive. About 35 people attended the videoconference, including some regional police chiefs, fire chiefs and Emergency Medical Service personnel. *For more information, contact Jon Huss, Deputy Regional Director at (806) 767-0479, or e-mail jon.huss@tdh.state.tx.us.*



X-ray Facility Under Investigation.

Staff from Region 1's Radiation Control program are investigating a mobile X-ray company which is alleged to have defrauded customers. Reports by the company to facilities were signed by physicians who had not read the reports and had not interpreted the film. Doctors whose names were affixed to the X-ray reports complained to TDH that their signatures had been forged and that the reports were fraudulent. The investigation is ongoing; criminal prosecution of the facility appears likely. *For more information, contact Tim Gibson, Environmental Specialist at (806) 655-7151, or e-mail tim.gibson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Cancer Registry Calendar.

Region 1's Cancer Registry program has produced a calendar for distribution to hospitals, cancer reporters and others. In the three years the calendar has been produced, it has evolved from a wall calendar to a desk calendar to its current desktop organizer format. In addition to information for cancer reporters on compliance and training, the calendar includes general information about TDH programs and articles detailing how TDH works to promote public health in local communities. The Cancer Registry staff have received numerous positive comments about this year's calendar. *For more information, contact Kimberly Kinney-Lara, Regional Cancer Registry Director at (806) 767-0323, or e-mail kimberley.kinney-lara@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 2/3



Hepatitis A.

Region 2/3 investigated a Hepatitis A cases in Rotan, Fisher County. Four school-age persons were disclosed with Hepatitis A between December 8th and December 28. These individuals acquired Hep A from association with each other. One of the cases worked at the local Dairy Queen for several days before becoming ill. The Dairy Queen was not the source of infection for the four cases but it was determined that the potential for spread was present so a news release was developed to alert individuals who ate at the restaurant to see their medical care provider to determine their need for immune globulin as a preventative measure. Region 2/3 Retail Food staff from the Abilene office went to the Dairy Queen to view their sanitation techniques, and made sure that proper precautions were being made to prevent spread. Region 2/3 Client Services staff headquartered in

Abilene and Stamford were instrumental in obtaining the histories of the confirmed cases. The regional director was in contact with the Fisher County Health Authority, C.M. Callan, M.D., to notify him of the confirmed cases and to approve the news release that was distributed to the local media on January 3, disclosing the number of confirmed cases, the clinical signs for Hep A, the precautions to take to prevent spread, and the use of immune globulin to prevent spread. The Dairy Queen, and the days and times the Hep A infected worker was present, was disclosed so individuals at high risk for complications with Hep A infection could contact their physician for advice concerning prevention. *For more information, contact Connie Lindley at (817) 264-4921 or e-mail connie.lindley@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 4 & 5 North



Public Health Region 4&5North Public Health Nursing Program.

Recently the Regional Public Health Nursing Program has been recognized through a number of awards. The Regional Director of Public Health Nursing Sharon Flournoy and the Regional Nurse Managers were awarded the TDH Administrative Excellence Award in the Public Health Category for the nomination of “A System for Preparing Public Health Nurses to Provide and Document Essential Public Health Services.” The process was also nominated for the Essential Services Award at the Annual Nursing Leadership Conference and the Regional Nurse Management Team will be one of the recipients of this award. Additionally, Sharon Flournoy and Dixie Scott (Regional Nurse Manager) will receive the Educational Impact Award at the conference for a program submitted with Susan Bennett (Regional Maternal and Child Health Nutrition Consultant) to teach public health nurses more about the benefits of Folic Acid. At the conference, Ms. Flournoy will be honored as the Outstanding Public Health Nurse Leader of the Year. *For more information, contact Sharon Flournoy, Public Health Nursing Program at (903) 533-5218 or e-mail sharon.flournoy@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Community Health.

LaJuan Scott and Dreka Strickland attended a meeting of the Office of Rural Community Affairs. This office was created in 220 during the 77th legislative session to serve as the point agency for the state’s health, economic development, and community development programs targeting rural communities in Texas. *For more information, contact William Oliver, Community Health Services Program at (903) 533-5388 or e-mail william.oliver@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Tobacco Education.

EDee Crosman met with a joint Texarkana, Texas/Arkansas, coalition to assist the Arkansas side with writing a proposal for funding for tobacco settlement dollars. The plan is to coordinate activities in both states in the Northeast Texas and Southwest Arkansas area. It was interesting to note how Arkansas funds are being distributed. Perhaps Texas will use some of their ideas in the future. *For more information, contact William Oliver, Community Health Services Program at (903) 533-5388 or e-mail william.oliver@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Zoonosis Control Program.

On January 28-29, the Regional Veterinarian, participated in a meeting of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Food Safety Advisory Committee. The meeting consisted of a trip to Washington D.C. where the group met with leadership in the USDA, FDA, National Association of Federal Veterinarians, and the AVMA. *For more information, contact James Wright, Zoonosis Control Program at (903) 533-5243 or e-mail james.wright@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Emergency Preparedness Activities.

Dr. Paul McGaha, Barbara Brandon, and Brett Hart attended the annual meeting of Department of Public Safety Disaster District Committee 1B – Tyler members. Michael Brock, DPSDEM Liaison Officer, facilitated the meeting. State Representative Leo Berman and Senator David Cain's aide Allan Haynes attended. Questions left on the table for TDH: What assistance can the Hazard Communications Division give to jurisdictions preparing for a terrorist incident? What feedback can the Hazard Communications Division give based on the submission of Tier II reports concerning chemicals to jurisdictions?

Dr. Paul McGaha, Dr. James Wright, and Brett Hart presented information on bioterrorism awareness at a meeting of local and county officials, EMS, Police, Fire, and members of the public from Henderson County. Two CE hours in the clinically related operations category were given for EMS personnel attending. A list of items needed for field decontamination in a hazmat event, which was compiled by Smith County Fire Marshall Jim Seaton for Volunteer Fire Departments, was distributed. *For more information, contact Brett Hart, Emergency Medical Services Program at (903) 533-5291 or e-mail brett.hart@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Commissioner's Visit.

Dr. Sanchez visited Public Health Regions 4/5 North on January 23-25. Staff enjoyed meeting him and hearing his goals and objectives for improving the health of Texans, specifically East Texans. *For more information, contact Dr. Paul McGaha, Regional Director at (903) 533-5264 or e-mail paul.mcgaha@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 6 & 5 South



Hantavirus Investigation.

The Zoonosis Control Program is currently assisting the City Of Houston Health Department with an active Hantavirus case. Regional staff have provided expertise in conducting a home-site environmental assessment and environmental assessments of the patient's church and work site in order to determine where the disease might have been contracted. Regional staff will also be conducting an environmental assessment of a duck hunting area in Danbury (Brazoria County). *For more information, contact Dana Wiltz-Beckham, Regional Zoonosis Control Program Manager at (713) 767-3302 or e-mail dana.beckham@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Meningococcemia Case.

On December 8, a woman from the city of Batson (Hardin County) died from Meningococcemia in a hospital in Beaumont City (Jefferson County). The patient worked as a janitor and helped to serve food in a school in Liberty County right before the onset of her disease. Dr. Huai Lin, the regional epidemiologist, worked with the local health departments (LHDs) in the involved counties to reassure those concerned that the illness was not a food borne disease and the fact that the woman served food in the school did not warrant any special treatment to the students and faculty members. In addition, Dr. Lin worked with the medical professionals from LHDs and the TDH regional and central offices to develop a Public Health Advisory for the LHDs to disseminate to their local physicians. *For more information, contact Huai Lin, Epidemiology Program Manager at (713) 767-3232 or e-mail huai.lin@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Tobacco Innovative Grant Dental Survey.

Approximately two thousand eight hundred students were screened in Colorado, Matagorda, Liberty, Galveston, Brazoria, Fort Bend, and Harris Counties as part of a year-long study to investigate alternative methods of predicting dental disease in communities in the Gulf Coast area. Data collection for the seven-county dental study involved a partnership between the University of Texas Dental Branch, the University of Texas School of Public Health, Harris County Health and Environmental Services, the City of Houston, the Texas Department of Health, and the Dental Health Task Force of the Greater Houston Metropolitan Area. Information from the study will be utilized in formulating a Texas oral health strategic plan. The Dental Health Task Force will continue to analyze the information collected in the coming months. *For more information, contact William G. Gray, Region 6/5s Dental Director at (713) 767-3471 or e-mail william.gray@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 7



Memorandum of Understanding.

The Bastrop County Commissioner's Court entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with region 7 to continue the local health unit that was established in 2000. The Memorandum obligates Bastrop County to provide a registered sanitarian and to appoint a public health advisory board. Region 7, through the Memorandum, is committed to working with the advisory board on prioritized public health issues, implementing a comprehensive community health improvement plan, and evaluating the activities of the local public health system. The advisory board has prioritized cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and children's health as the most significant public health issues for Bastrop County. *For more information, contact Lisa McKamie, Community Oriented Public Health at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail lisa.mckamie@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Surplus Equipment Helps Animal Control Stakeholders.

On January 29, Navasota Animal Control (Grimes County) became the first beneficiary of outdated region 7 equipment in a program sponsored by the Zoonosis Control program. The transfer was made in accordance with TDH policy and procedure and with the help of the Meat Safety Assurance, Materials and Acquisition Management, and Automated Data Systems programs and Regional Administration. A laptop computer, previously destined for surplus, was donated to the Navasota Animal Control Shelter. The City of Navasota will install software on the donated computer to assist animal control officers in documenting the shelter's population and animals' final disposition. The Zoonosis Control program perceives that there are numerous animal control agencies in region 7 that could benefit from surplus TDH computers and furniture. This donation is the first in a regional initiative to improve animal control agency services to citizens in Central Texas. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Division at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2450 or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Asbestos Study.

Region 7 Starts Second Phase of Asbestos Study. Consumer Health Protection /Asbestos Branch started the second phase of a two-phase study in January. The second phase of the study will concentrate on the impact the new law, House Bill (HB) 1278 and its counterpart Senate Bill (SB) 509, has had on potential asbestos disturbance from renovation and demolition activity in Texas. The study is expected to be complete late this summer with findings complete by the fall of 2002. *For more information, contact Oran S.*



Hepatitis A Shot Clinic.

As a result of five positive Hepatitis A cases in a local school district within McLennan County, the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District sponsored a school-wide immunization clinic on February 5, 2002.

The shot clinic was a group effort with staff members from Waco-McLennan County Public Health District, the independent school district, region 7 Immunization/Disease Surveillance and Emergency Medical Services Divisions. Also, staff of a local Texas Vaccine for Children provider assisted to administer the vaccine.

As the lines doubled with families patiently waiting their turn, the staff worked diligently to get everyone vaccinated. Approximately 495 doses of Hepatitis A were administered to the school-age children in approximately a two and a half hour time slot. *For more information, contact Diane Romnes, Immunization Division at (254) 778-6744 ext. 2416 or e-mail diane.romnes@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Avoiding EMS Landmines.

A program EMS has developed called "Avoiding EMS Landmines" was presented to several fire departments and EMS organizations. This program helps them to be proactively compliant with EMS law and rules. *For more information, contact Rod Dennison, Emergency Medical Services at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2288 or e-mail rod.dennison@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Community Development Success.

The rural counties of Bastrop, Lee and Fayette have always had a great interest in the youth but few local resources to support them. Over a year ago a group of agency and consumer representatives surveyed the citizens of these counties to get input of what they saw as the major problems facing their youth and the type of services that were needed to support their youth. As a result of this interagency collaboration and the consumer input, the group has been named the Community Partnership for Family Voices. They obtained 501 © (3) status and in recent weeks have been awarded two separate grants for children and family supports in the amounts of \$10,000 and \$14,000 respectively. The money will be used to assist families who have had multiple agencies work with them; still have unmet needs and would benefit from more comprehensive wrap around services. The Region 7 Case Management Coordinator provided the group with leadership and hours of time in the development of the partnership group, the writing of grants, and the establishment of services to be made available to eligible families in Bastrop, Lee and Fayette. In recognition of her contributions to the Partnership and community, she was recently chosen to serve on their first Board of Directors. *For more information, contact Leslie Anderson, Social Work Services and Medicaid Programs at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2320 or e-mail leslie.anderson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Year 2000 Record Abstractions Complete.

Region 7 Birth Defect Registry Program has reviewed the medical records of all regional births for 2000 and has completed the data entry regarding these abstractions for 97% of the records. Regional staff has also been supporting Region 4 in data entry and quality assurance activities. *For more information, contact Leslie Anderson, Social Work Services and Medicaid Programs at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2320 or e-mail leslie.anderson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Case Management Kudos.

Region 7 case management staff received a call of appreciation from a father for the case management services his family had received. He stated, “She saved my life. She went above and beyond anything I could ask from anyone...I was overwhelmed by the love she brought into my house. She was professional but loving. It wasn’t all about paperwork.” The family was referred for case management because a son had asthma and needed a nebulizer. In addition to their son’s problems, the family was also having to deal with a fourteen-year-old daughter who had run away with a nineteen-year-old man and who had not been heard from in several weeks. The father stated that he had recently lost his job because he was so distraught over his family’s problems and he had been close to suicide. He reported that the emotional support that he had received from his case manager helped him sort through his feelings. She helped him realize how much he loved his daughter but also helped him find the strength to overcome his fears and the hope necessary to get on with life. He stated, “She did a miracle”. The day the father called was the day his daughter had returned home. (And yes, our staff asked. The father reported that they had filed charges against the nineteen year old that had dumped the girl in California.) All of this from a request for a nebulizer...this is the comprehensive, family centered case management that TDH has been practicing for years. *For more information, contact Leslie Anderson, Social Work Services and Medicaid Programs at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2320 or e-mail leslie.anderson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Ready Texans.

Several years ago the American Red Cross established a program with state agencies called Ready Texans. State employees who became Red Cross disaster workers would be given up to three weeks administrative leave if called upon to respond to a disaster. In the past few years, the American Red Cross developed Disaster Mental Health Services that responds with the Red Cross in disasters to assess and manage the mental health issues of the disaster responders, volunteers, and community residents. On January 17, Social Work Services Director in Region 7 who is also trained as a disaster mental health counselor, was called to respond with the Red Cross to the plane crash in Temple where the plane crashed into a home in a residential neighborhood, killing three and injuring two. The staff person reported at 9:30 P.M. to Scott and White Hospital to meet the family and friends of the victims as they arrived and remained until 5:30AM until the last family arrived and got situated. The Ready Texas Program is a wonderful and exciting way for TDH employees to volunteer in their communities at times when trained volunteers are needed so badly. With the focus on September 11, it would be a great time for TDH to reintroduce this partnership with the American Red Cross. *For more information, contact Leslie Anderson, Social Work Services and Medicaid Programs at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2320 or e-mail leslie.anderson@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Prevention Counseling and Partner Elicitation (PCPE).

A PCPE training course was presented January 22-25, for HIV/STD prevention service providers. The course was hosted by Region Seven HIV/STD Program and facilitated by the Texas HIV Connection. *For more information, contact Jennifer Schneider, HIV/STD Program at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail jennifer.schneider@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Targeted Outreach Screening.

Region 7 HIV/STD Program experienced an increase in primary and secondary syphilis morbidity in Robertson County. Investigations around 8 cases led to a targeted outreach event where staff from HIV/STD, Tuberculosis, and EMS teamed-up to provide door-to-

door STD screening for syphilis, HIV, and Tuberculosis. Outreach staff transported sex partners of infected individuals to TDH sub-office in Robertson County, where the public health nurse provided epi treatment and full STD exams. Blood was drawn on 51 individuals, resulting in 5 new cases of syphilis. *For more information, contact Jennifer Schneider, IV/STD Program at (254) 778-6744 or e-mail jennifer.schneider@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 8



Tobacco Summit.

Region 8 staff facilitated a Bexar Co. Tobacco Summit that brought together a broad range of coalitions and related interests. Besides improving communication and coordination of efforts, the group plans to establish several subcommittees including one to consider a clean air ordinance. *For more information, contact Chip Riggins, Regional Director at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggings@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Assessment, planning and partnership workgroup.

Our regional assessment, planning and partnership workgroup began a regional assessment of state-level essential services using the National Public Health Practice Standards, State Tool. *For more information, contact Chip Riggins, Regional Director at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggings@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Local Health Authority Statutes.

Staff gave presentations on Local Health Authority Statutes at the County Judge's and Commissioner's meeting in College Station and Practical aspects of outbreak investigations at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio. *For more information, contact Chip Riggins, Regional Director at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggings@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TB symposium.

Program staff hosted a TB symposium at the Amistad Chapter, Binational health coalition in Del Rio and attended the Jan. meeting of the Health Organization of Piedras Negras and Eagle Pass (H.O.P.E.) where plans were discussed for international CPR classes and development of a Binational Disaster Contingency Plan. *For more information, contact Chip Riggins, Regional Director at (210) 949-2003 or e-mail chip.riggings@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Public Health Region 11



Bioterrorism Conference.

On January 11, Region 11 staff attended a Bioterrorism Conference held at the Harlingen Municipal auditorium. This was organized by Dr. Richard Campman, Regional epidemiologist, with the Valley Baptist Health System. Attendees included medical and law enforcement personnel and emergency responders. *For more information, contact Richard Campman, Epidemiologist at (956) 423-0130 or e-mail richard.campman@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Bioterrorism Alert.

On January 12, Regional Director gave a presentation on the TDH response to bioterrorism and risk communication, plus a session for questions and answers with Dr. McCormick, Dean School of Public Health and Dr. Susan Fischer-Hoch at the Bioterrorism Alert: Healthcare Professionals' Response Presentation at the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College Health professionals and first responders attended, with a

good response from physicians and public health. *For more information, contact Dr. Brian Smith, Regional Director at (956) 423-0130 or e-mail brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Border Health Workforce.

Regional Center for Health Workforce Studies at Center for Health Economics and Policy (CHEP) The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio held the First Roundtable on Border Health Workforce Issues in Harlingen. On January 15, the regional director attended the advisory council made of representatives from the local health care delivery system and academic sector. This regional center, headed by Dr Antonio Furino, serves the South Central Region of the United States and the United States/Mexico Border to target needs in the health care workforce. *For more information, contact Dr. Brian Smith, Regional Director at (956) 423-0130 or e-mail brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Robert Wood Johnson Project Steering Committee meeting at Nuestra Clinica del Valle.

On January 30, the project discussed is called Creating Integrated Health Outreach to Isolated Colonia Residents in Hidalgo.

This is a \$4 million project was granted jointly by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Health Services and Resources Administration, Bureau of Primary Health Care. The purpose of this four-year demonstration is to create an integrated model that will help isolated people, residents of *colonias* along the Texas border, improve appropriate utilization of primary care services and participate in building the capacity of their community to more effectively improve the health of its members. Emphasis is placed on outreach, early periodic screening and testing, health education, developing social capital, and improving health status and health care access at the community level. The areas of San Carlos and La Joya in Hidalgo county will be the target communities with “promotoras” who will facilitate access to the health care system. *For more information, contact Dr. Mark Rodriguez, Public Health Advisor at (956) 361-3636 or e-mail mark.rodriguez@tdh.state.tx.us.*